

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 31, 2014

The Honorable John Carter, Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
B-307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Price, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Carter and Ranking Member Price:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2015 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, we strongly urge you to provide at least \$340 million for the Assistance to Firefighters (FIRE) Grant Program and \$340 million for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program. This total represents the overall amount included for firefighter grants in the Fiscal Year 2014 omnibus spending bill.

The SAFER program provides much-needed funding for career and volunteer fire departments across America to hire new firefighters and recruit and retain volunteer firefighters. This program is critical to the thousands of fire stations across the country that are currently operating short of staff. When adequately funded, SAFER will bring our nation's fire departments to staffing levels that will improve the safety of our firefighters, and the communities they serve, as they respond to the scene of a fire, auto accident, or other natural or manmade disasters. Two-thirds of all career and volunteer fire departments in our nation, located in both large cities and small towns, do not have sufficient personnel to adequately protect the public.

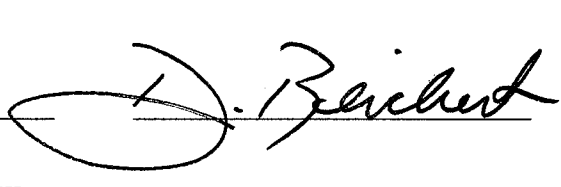
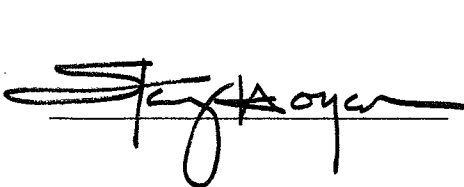
Under the SAFER program, fire departments throughout the country are able to apply for federal grants to hire and pay new firefighters. In addition, grants have been awarded to state and local organizations to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters. As you know, the SAFER program complements the very successful Assistance to Firefighters Grant program, through which the federal government provides funds for training and equipment to fire departments throughout the country. Ensuring that career and volunteer departments have adequate numbers of firefighters will allow departments to fully utilize the training and equipment funds provided through the FIRE Grant program. We urge you to fund this vital program at \$340 million in FY2015.

Through the committee's past efforts, we clearly demonstrated Congress' strong bipartisan support for the FIRE Grant program, as well as its understanding of the contributions this program has made to our firefighters and the communities they serve. This program has positively impacted public safety by providing more than \$6.6 billion since 2001 for infrared cameras, personal protective gear, hazmat detection devices, improved breathing apparatuses, and interoperable communications systems. This is the basic equipment our fire departments need to effectively respond to all hazards. However, the more than \$3 billion in applications submitted on average annually demonstrate that there is much work to be done before all of our communities are served by first responders who are equipped and trained as well as possible.

We ask far too many of our firefighters to risk their lives in our defense every day, too often with insufficient staffing, inadequate training and obsolete equipment, and we have an obligation to provide them the necessary resources to perform their jobs as safely and effectively as possible. We urge you to help Congress meet that obligation by funding the Assistance to Firefighters (FIRE) Grant Program and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Program at \$340 million each in the FY2015 Homeland Security Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Bill Russell Jr.

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Earl Blum

Loretta Sanchez

Chris Collins

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